

CAREER GUIDE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY SPECIALISTS

SOC Code: 29-9011

Pay Band(s): 5, 6, 7, and 8 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Review, evaluate, and analyze work environments and design programs and procedures to control, eliminate, and prevent disease or injury caused by chemical, physical, and biological agents or ergonomic factors. May conduct inspections and enforce adherence to laws and regulations governing the health and safety of individuals.

Occupational Health And Safety Specialist positions in the Commonwealth *are assigned to three different Career Groups*, depending upon the nature of their work:

Public Safety Compliance Career Group:

- [Compliance/Safety Officer I](#)
- [Compliance/Safety Officer II](#)
- [Compliance/Safety Officer III](#)
- [Compliance/Safety Officer IV](#)

Environmental Services Career Group:

- [Environmental Specialist I](#)
- [Environmental Specialist II](#)

Minerals Regulatory Services Career Group:

- [Minerals Specialist I](#)
- [Minerals Specialist II](#)

Occupational Health and Safety Specialists may also want to pursue related career opportunities within the Commonwealth, depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[General Administration](#)
[Program Administration](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Health and Safety Specialists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

1. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.

2. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
3. Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.
4. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
5. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
6. Using mathematics to solve problems.
7. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
8. Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
9. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
10. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
11. Analyzing needs and product requirements to create a design.
12. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
13. Identifying measures or indicators of system performance and the actions needed to improve or correct performance, relative to the goals of the system.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Health and Safety Specialists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
2. The chemical composition, structure, and properties of substances and of the chemical processes and transformations that they undergo. This includes uses of chemicals and their interactions, danger signs, production techniques, and disposal methods.
3. The knowledge and prediction of physical principles, laws, their interrelationships, and applications to understanding fluid, material, and atmospheric dynamics, and mechanical, electrical, atomic and sub-atomic structures and processes.
4. The information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
5. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
6. Laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.
7. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
8. The structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
9. Plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Health and Safety Specialists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an

individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
2. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
3. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
4. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
5. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
6. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
7. Add, subtract, multiply, or divide quickly and correctly.
8. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
9. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
10. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
11. Remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, and procedures.
12. Choose the right mathematical methods or formulas to solve a problem.
13. Speak clearly so others can understand you.

Tasks

Note: *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Occupational Health and Safety Specialists. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

1. Investigates adequacy of ventilation, exhaust equipment, lighting, and other conditions which may affect employee health, comfort, or efficiency.
2. Conducts evaluations of exposure to ionizing and non-ionizing radiation and to noise.
3. Collects samples of dust, gases, vapors, and other potentially toxic materials for analysis.
4. Recommends measures to ensure maximum employee protection.
5. Collaborates with engineers and physicians to institute control and remedial measures for hazardous and potentially hazardous conditions of equipment.
6. Participates in educational meetings to instruct employees in matters pertaining to occupational health and prevention of accidents.
7. Prepares reports including observations, analysis of contaminants, and recommendation for control and correction of hazards.
8. Reviews physicians' reports and conducts worker studies to determine if diseases or illnesses are job related.
9. Prepares and calibrates equipment used to collect and analyze samples.
10. Prepares documents to be used in legal proceedings and gives testimony in court proceedings.
11. Uses cost-benefit analysis to justify money spent.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Occupational Health and Safety Specialist work is called a “Social” occupation since it frequently involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others. It can also be “Investigative” since it may frequently involve working with ideas, require an extensive amount of thinking, and can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

A specific credential, or the ability to acquire a specific credential, may be required for Occupational Health and Safety Specialist positions in state government. Some examples of required credentials are the Food Safety and Inspection Service enforcement certification from the Federal US Department of Agriculture and the Mines Inspector Certification from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy. These and other positions are identified by the specific state agency. To improve career advancement opportunities, you should also consider the advantages of earning other certifications and include this step in your self-development plan.

Certification information for mine inspectors can be found on the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy web site at <http://www.mme.state.va.us/Dm/default.htm>. Certification information for jobs in the food safety and inspection area can be found on the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs web site at <http://www.vdacs.state.va.us/index.html>

The REHS/RS (registered environmental health specialist/registered sanitarian) exam is the most prestigious credential in the environmental health field. It was developed in cooperation with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), the premier organization in the US for environmental health regulators. For more information go to <http://www.experioronline.com/rehs.htm>

Other credentialing resources that may be of interest:

- The National Environmental Health Agency at <http://www.neha.org/>
- The Food and Drug Administration at <http://fda.gov>
- Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulations at <http://www.dpor.state.va.us>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Professional occupations like Occupational Health and Safety Specialist usually require a college degree as the minimum formal education requirement. However, some jobs may also require graduate school. Some jobs may need some on-the-job training, but many of these jobs assume that the person will already have the required skills, knowledge, work-related experience, and/or training. These occupations often involve coordinating, training, supervising, or managing the activities of others to accomplish goals. Some advanced communication and organizational skills may be required.

Sources of educational, training, and learning opportunities include:

1. College/University coursework or degree.

2. Join professional organizations.
3. On-the-job training.
4. Certification programs.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to:

http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example, in the Public Safety Compliance Career Group:

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	MANAGEMENT ROLES
2	Compliance/Safety Officer I	
3	Compliance/Safety Officer II	
4	Compliance/Safety Officer III	
5	Compliance/Safety Officer IV	Compliance Manager I
6		Compliance Manager II
7		Compliance Manager III

Sample Career Path

Compliance/Safety Officer I

The Compliance/Safety Officer I role provides career tracks for Institutional Fire Safety Inspectors and other inspectors that perform routine inspections checking from a predetermined list or set of well defined procedures for obvious safety violations, hazardous conditions, or non-compliance with established laws or standards.

Compliance/Safety Officer II

The Compliance/Safety Officer II role provides career tracks for compliance officers that perform routine to moderate level investigations, reviews and/or inspections but is expected to judge compliance against more complex standards requiring interviews, collection and analysis of data, evidence accumulation, testing and/or computation of results. May assist others in proper management of hazardous materials. May interpret and communicate regulatory requirements to industry, consumers and the general public.

Compliance/Safety Officer III

The Compliance/Safety Officer III role provides career tracks for compliance officers who perform advanced level investigations or inspections of assigned cases and/or compliance audits. Responsibilities include interviewing, analyzing or sampling various processes or records in complex manufacturing or commercial enterprises, enforcing strict compliance with federal, state and local regulation and law.

Compliance/Safety Officer IV

The Compliance/Safety Officer IV role provides career tracks for compliance officers whose responsibilities include acting as a subject matter expert and/or first-line supervisor. Employees perform the most complex evaluations and may recommend changes in the law to accommodate new or variable processes or procedures.

Compliance Manager I

The Compliance Manager I role provides career tracks for managers who administer a program area and is responsible for the attainment of pre-established goals and objectives. Evaluates results as compared to standards and recommends remedial action. Requests and assigns resources and evaluates results attained.

Compliance Manager II

The Compliance Manager II role provides career tracks for managers that administer multiple programs of compliance and safety, providing for shifts of resources when needed as problems arise. Provides overall program support and evaluation of effectiveness as related to plans and objectives. Reports policy issues to executive management and recommends changes as appropriate.

Compliance Manager III

The Compliance Manager III role provides career tracks for executive level managers who serve as the agency Deputy or in a very large organization manages multiple programs, or serves as the Compliance and Safety Program Director, reporting to the agency executive. Plans, directs, evaluates and controls compliance/safety programs. May draft legislation and formulate policy under the direction of the chief executive.

For example, in the Environmental Services Career Group:

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	MANAGEMENT ROLES
4	Environmental Specialist I	
5	Environmental Specialist II	Environmental Manager I
6		Environmental Manager II
7		Environmental Manager III

Environmental Specialist I

The Environmental Specialist I role provides career tracks for environmental specialists or environmental inspectors who are responsible for conducting projects or components of programs related to environmental management public health and safety and/or consumer

protection. Responsibilities range from entry-level specialist to supervising specialized inspection activities to include planning and development for the assigned program or territory.

Environmental Specialist II

The Environmental Specialist II role provides career tracks for environmental specialists who serve as program experts in the conduct of environmental management and public health and safety and/or consumer protection activities or have supervisory and/or program coordination responsibilities.

Environmental Manager I

The Environmental Manager I role provides career tracks for managers of an environmental program(s) and staff within a geographic or other designated area. The assigned programs impact the environment and/or public safety and health. Responsibilities include planning, administering, and generating policies, specifications and standards to promote program goals and objectives.

Environmental Manager II

The Environmental Manager II role provides career tracks for mid-level managers, district managers or statewide program directors responsible for managing environmental program areas and staff. Employees manage a major agency program directly tied to the mission of the agency or multiple programs. Oversight of operational activities include: inspections, compliance, enforcement, conservation, analysis, licensing and certification, and public education, technical services or control activities having an impact on public health and the environment.

Environmental Manager III

The Environmental Manager III role provides career tracks for executive managers having responsibilities ranging from managing a geographic region of an agency, or, statewide responsibility for directing multiple programs within a discipline to responsible for all environmental management programs statewide.

For example, in the Minerals Regulatory Services Career Group:

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	MANAGEMENT ROLES
5	Minerals Specialist I	
6	Minerals Specialist II	Minerals Manager I
7		Minerals Manager II

Minerals Specialist I

The Mineral Specialist I role provides career tracks for mineral specialists performing entry level to working supervisory responsibilities. The role allows career progression as technical specialists that enforce laws and regulations or as supervisors. The first career track is for technical specialists who provide technical assistance/consultation in ventilation, roof control, electrical, geology, hydrology, engineering, agronomy, ecology, biology, botany, fish and wildlife, endangered species, and small mine services. The second career track is for employees that continue to enforce laws and regulations while assuming responsibility for staff supervision or providing project/team leadership in reclamation programs.

Minerals Specialist II

The Mineral Specialist II role provides career tracks for supervisors responsible for coal or mineral mining programs and direct supervision of staff responsible for enforcing mineral extraction laws and regulations. May conduct informal hearings; inspect mineral extraction operations; manage serious injury and fatality investigations; and recommend new and revised policies and regulations.

Minerals Manager I

The Mineral Manager I role provides career tracks for managers responsible for one or more regional or statewide programs such as mineral mining, energy, coal inspection and enforcement, or abandoned mine land reclamation.

Minerals Manager II

The Mineral Manager II role provides career tracks for executive-level managers who serve as Deputies responsible for all mineral extraction within the Commonwealth. Employees provide direction, policy interpretation and coordination for new or changed programs, goals, processes and strategic plan development; develop legislative proposals and advise the Director concerning the budget impact of proposed legislative changes; and render final agency decisions for regulatory programs.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>